Article I. Girls

584 According to Nkundó custom it is acceptable for an expected child, not yet born or still very young, to be promised in marriage to X or Y. This practice was formerly very common and is still quite prevalent today. It is called banda bǒna or bǒmoto, literally, "to count a child" or "to count a woman." The ikulá is paid at the time of the promise. Later the matter is carried out in the usual fashion; the other parts of the bride price are paid either while the fiancée is young or, preferably, at the time when she goes to her husband.

584 855 Until that time, if one of the girl's relatives is already a wife of a polygamist husband-to-be or of one of his relatives, the child is brought up in her husband's family from a fairly early age, depending on the circumstances. She lives with her relative. She may be barely seven or eight years old, for example. If no one in her husband's clan can take care of her, [232] she spends only one or two weeks there to become acquainted, little by little, with people and places; she repeats the visit from time to time. Her mother accompanies her, for being so young she could not get used to being there alone, without support, without her parents. Therefore it is necessary to wait till she is old enough to be somewhat independent and able to manage by herself. That time usually comes around the [145] beginning of puberty, thus sometime between the ages of twelve and fifteen.

584 833 Like an adult woman, she is already called bompáka or wǎlí, depending on the portion of the bride price that has been paid. She has all the duties and privileges of a wife: sexual relations, food preparation, care of the household, etc. There is no set date or age for the beginning of cohabitation. This matter is settled between the husband and his parents-in-law. The latter do not have the right to [606] delay the time, even if their daughter is still too young, but they can make use of their great influence over their son-in-law. The modern [78] [571] generation is not shocked by sexual relations between an adulterer [sic] and a girl who has not reached puberty. Besides, all is in order from the legal standpoint; since the man has paid the bride price, he is the